In response to the Office Action of July 2, 2003, Paper No. 21, please amend the above-identified application as indicated below.

The deadline to respond to this action was October 2, 2003, and for which a one month extension of time is also requested to extend the time for response from October 2, 2003 to November 2, 2003. As such, this response is timely filed. Please enter the following amendments and remarks.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1 - 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (currently amended): A method for protecting from peptidase degradation a therapeutic peptide sensitive to such peptidase degradation *in vivo*, said peptide comprising between 3 and 50 amino acids and having a carboxy terminus and an amino terminus and a carboxy terminal amino acid and an amino terminal amino acid, comprising:

(a) modifying said peptide by coupling a reactive group to the carboxy terminal amino acid, to the amino terminal amino acid, or to an amino acid located between the amino terminal amino acid and the carboxy terminal amino acid;

(b) forming a covalent bond between said reactive group and a reactive functionality on a ~~blood component~~ albumin to form a peptide-~~blood component~~ albumin conjugate, thereby protecting said peptide from peptidase degradation, while retaining therapeutic activity of the therapeutic peptide; and

(c) analyzing the stability of said peptide-~~blood component~~ albumin conjugate towards peptidase degradation and confirming that the peptide-~~blood component~~ albumin conjugate has a higher stability than the therapeutic peptide.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A method according to claim 7, wherein the peptide-~~blood component~~ albumin conjugate is formed *in vivo*.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A method according to claim 7, wherein the peptide ~~blood component~~ albumin conjugate is formed *ex vivo*.

Claim 10 (canceled).

Claim 11 (original): A method according to claim 7, wherein said reactive group comprises a maleimide group.

Claim 12 (original): A method according to claim 7, wherein said reactive group is coupled to said peptide via a lysine and/or a linking group.

Claim 13 (canceled).

Claim 14 (original): A method according to claim 7, wherein one or more of said amino acids is synthetic.

Claims 15 - 25 (canceled).